

Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative

COMBINED MEETING: FAMILY SUPPORT AND PARENT EDUCATION WORK GROUPS

November 22, 2005 - 9 - 11 a.m.

Members Present: Megan Coyle, Elaine Davis, Deborah Gangluff, Barbara Gilkey, Randy Glenn, Martha Hiett, Lisa Johnson, Nick Long, Sherri J. McLemore, Martha Reeder, J. B. Robertson, Kathy Robinson, Sorita Rusher, Paula C. Watson, Lorie Williams, and Loretta Wilson.

Regrets: Jackie Gorton, Traci Johnson, Howard Knoff, Gwen Paul, and Cristi Sellers.

Martha Reeder called the meeting to order. The group made self-introductions.

Agenda Item #1: Update - Martha Reeder

Discussion: Martha Reeder announced that Jackie Gorton is no longer the chair of the Family Support Work Group. She is now in a new position and is no longer able to participate in the initiative. She also announced that Megan Coyle is to be the new chair of the Family Support Work Group, and Barbara Gilkey will continue to chair the Parent Education Work Group.

QRS UPDATE. Martha Reeder reported that the QRS sub-group has completed drafts of five of the seven performance measures. This represented a great deal of thought and work to get it on paper. The drafts were distributed in the handouts to the combined groups.

The QRS group tried to stay within the guidelines as listed in our previous minutes--Simple, Valid, Realistic, and Efficient. All the work that this group has done on this project is important, and it is understood that the work will be condensed and made concise. All the work will show up in some way either in the quality rating scale or the toolkit. The QRS component has to be something that can be measured and monitored—there must be a way to hold programs accountable. This group still needs to flesh the items out under the various categories.

A short review of the draft measures was made to help the group understand the process. Level 1 is just one step below basic licensing. Level 2 gathers baseline information. There is no required score relating to the environmental rating scale (ERS) at this level, but the baseline ERS will provide the program with a prescription as to what is needed to improve plus a program improvement plan.

Level 3 is more concrete than some of the other measures. A specific score is required on the environmental rating scale. The big indicators kick in at Level 3 and are amplified at Levels 4 and 5.

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Agenda Item #1, Continued: Update - Martha Reeder

Discussion: The broad categories for the measures came from the United Way, Success by Six, Stair Steps to Quality, by Anne W. Mitchell. All documents are on the website: www.accessarkansas.org/childcare/qrs.htm. Stair Steps to Quality is a tool kit and sort of a procedure way of building a quality rating system. There are ten states with a fully implemented quality based system. Arkansas had already put together its components when this document came out. The Early Care and Education Work Group has done its homework, and when we compared what we had put together, it was very similar.

There are several steps to building a quality rating system. The standards have to be in place. Once the standards are in place, then the accountability pieces go into place. The third piece is financing. All along the way, an effort should be made to get information out to the public and to educate parents as consumers of high quality early care and education.

Martha Reeder challenged the group to think seriously about their contribution to the project.

Agenda Item #2: Communication QRS Recommendations

Discussion: The draft communication recommendations were distributed. One of the concerns expressed was that some of the items are similar to what is written in recommendations from other sections. These need to be consistent with the other sections. It was noted that under the parent handbook on the Administrative sheet, nothing else is listed.

Most states have the family/community collaboration component disbursed in a lot of different areas of the scale rather than separate in its own category. The Tiers QRS sub-group thought it was important enough to separate it into its own category.

The other recommendation sheets providing information from the last meeting were also distributed. After finishing the recommendations today, Martha Reeder and Deborah Gangluff will update sheets to make sure the various components are consistent in the same columns.

Martha Reeder noted that not much could be added to Level 1 because it represents basic licensing. To make a change, this has to be something really big. If you think something is important, you need to make a case for it. Suggestions and strategies may be included in the self-study packet. Each group will have an opportunity for inclusion into the self-study packet.

Elaine Davis, who was leading the group in reviewing the communication recommendations, noted that it should have started on Level 2. They were looking for a way to get feedback from parents and a way to communicate with parents. They want parents to see what is going on with the program during the day.

The communications chart was changed to move up one level all the recommendations on the chart.

Agenda Item #2, Continued: Communication QRS Recommendations

Discussion: The question was asked: "Should the handbook be on Level 2 or Level 3?" Each center will develop the handbook based on its policy. Sorita Rusher explained the handbook at her center--A lot of the content of the handbook is already in the standards, based on licensing. The basic information should already be compiled. You can't expect a parent to know the rules unless you tell them. Sorita goes through the handbook with parents and the parents sign off on it. She stated that even programs that are financially struggling would be able to come up with a handbook. She noted that the parent handbook is about specific activities of that particular center.

Barbara Gilkey mentioned that the parent handbook in the ABC program has to go in with the proposal. The handbook could be on several different levels. It could be that at each level the handbook could be different.

The statement was made that "quality" cost money. That is the bottom line. There is hope that there will be financial incentives at each level. All kinds of things are being discussed related to incentives—substitute pay, scholarships, increased voucher monies, etc.

It was mentioned that the survey in Level 4 is a parent satisfaction survey/evaluation. The aim is to make sure that what other groups are calling a parent-family survey is the same thing as what this group is calling the parent/family survey.

Elaine Davis noted that the follow-up piece is very important. A lot of times follow-up or follow through is not done. The results of the survey should be reflected in the program improvement plan.

The question was asked, "Why include a home visit?" When the initial communication group met, the sub-group felt that home visits will enable the caregiver to better understand what a child brings to the classroom and why. It will provide the caregiver better insight into the child. Home visits help the child and parent to know that the teacher feels it is important enough for the teacher to come into the home.

This is a big challenge. The parents would have the opportunity to refuse the visit, but it is important that it be offered. It would be a feasible kind of thing with realistic expectations. It was suggested that a percentage of homes be visited instead of the homes of all the children. It may be a transitional kind of thing. Also, it was suggested that a program would want to send the most experienced person into the home, not a novice. It was generally agreed that home visits are important; How are we going to make it practical? The statement was made that if it improves the teacher, it means improvement for the child. It was also suggested that it could be mentioned as an addendum in the tool kit.

Elaine Davis and Barbara Gilkey agreed to look into finding more information about home visits.

Agenda Item #3: Moving from Protective Factors to Strategies

Discussion: Martha Reeder distributed a document related to moving from protective factors to strategies. Sherri Jo McLemore and Martha Reeder are the State Coordinators for the Strengthening Families Initiative (SFI). The Leadership Team for Strengthening Families is the same as the Leadership Team for AECCS. This piece is included in the self-assessment forms in the Strengthening Families program.

Possible use of the SFI self-assessment on Level 2 of the QRS might be an effective means of gathering baseline information on how a program is interacting with the families they serve.

Martha Reeder stated that this document includes the same things as the family support piece we are discussing. She asked the group to look at the document to see if this might be an appropriate tool for gathering baseline information.

Questions were raised as follows:

- What is the length of time required to complete?
- Who would complete it?
- Who would look at it after it is completed?

This self-assessment would probably be completed by the director/administrator of the program. This piece could be adapted and tweaked. Wisconsin has developed a version for family support issues. Illinois has adapted it for family childcare homes. In addition, a training entity in Illinois is developing a half-day training module regarding the five protective factors (The SFI self-assessment determines how programs are reinforcing the five protective factors). Copies of the self-assessment were distributed. Martha asked the group to review the document and consider its inclusion in QRS.

Agenda Item #4: Parenting Skills

Discussion: Sherri Jo McLemore and Megan Coyle agreed to work on the Parenting Skills component at the last meeting. Some of their discussion together related to the need to define parenting education and parenting skills.

Some of the questions asked, including the following:

- ? What do we mean when we are talking about parent education?
- ? What do we mean when we are talking about parenting skills?
- ? What do we focus on under this component?

Martha Reeder reminded the group that the toolkit would be designed for each level of the QRS system, and then based on different subjects. Some items can be included in the tool kit rather than specific recommendations for the QRS.

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Agenda Item #4, Continued: Parenting Skills

Discussion: Other comments include the following:

- ? This section has the potential to be a lot of work for Centers. Perhaps handouts could be developed addressing these issues.
- ? They could be available on the web site for the centers to download.
- ? One-stop shopping on the web site is a good idea.
- ? You do not have to have Internet access available for each center; other places are available including the public library.
- ? There are lots of things available from state agencies that are available to parents.
- ? There's always some program that will go out and find the extra stuff.
- ? The two work groups will be responsible for identifying resources.
- ? There is a lot of great stuff out there; it is not a one-time task. It will need to be continually updated.

The group worked together on suggesting possible changes in the document drafted by Sherri Jo and Megan. Megan agreed to make the changes in the draft document and forward the information to Martha Reeder. Sherri Jo also changing the name of one section of the measure. She suggested changing the name from "Community Collaboration" to "Linking Families to Services and Opportunities."

Agenda Item #5 - Final Remarks and Adjournment

Discussion: Deborah Gangluff agreed to pull all of this together for the next meeting. The Minutes will be sent along with a copy of the revised scales to each member. Each person will need to review the revisions and contact Martha Reeder. Sherrill Archer and Martha Hiatt agreed to work on the Student Learning component at the last meeting. Martha Hiatt indicated that she had forwarded her ideas to Sherrill.

The next meeting date is Thursday, January 5, 2006, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. The place is to be determined.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

RESULTING TASKS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

- ? Martha Reeder and Deborah Gangluff will update the draft component sheets with the proposed changes for communications and parenting skills for review and make sure the various components are consistent with the other sections for review at the next meeting.
- ? Elaine Davis and Barbara Gilkey agreed to search for more information related to home visits.
- ? The group was asked to review the self-assessment document and relay feedback to Martha Reeder prior to the next meeting. (The self-assessment forms can be found on the web site: www.cssp.org/uploadFiles/handbook.pdf beginning on page 29.)
- ? Megan Coyle will forward the information to Martha Reeder with the proposed changes related to parenting skills.
- ? Sherrill Archer and Martha Heitt will send their completed draft of the Student Learning component to Martha Reeder. These will be discussed at the next meeting